

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School Name	Saint Joseph's National School
Seoladh na scoile/ School Address	Kingscourt County Cavan
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	20172R

Date of Evaluation: 10-11-2016



WHAT IS A WHOLE-SCHOOL EVALUATION?

The Whole-School Evaluation model is used to provide whole-school evaluative information, advice and support to the school. These inspections affirm good practice and make recommendations, where appropriate, to aid the further development of educational provision in the school. In addition to evaluating management and leadership in the school, the inspectors typically examine the quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in four subjects, including English, Irish, Mathematics and one other subject.

HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

During this inspection, the inspector(s) evaluated and reported under the following headings or areas of enquiry:

1. Quality of leadership and management
2. Quality of school planning and school self-evaluation
3. Quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement
4. Quality of support for pupils

Inspectors describe the quality of each of these areas using the Inspectorate's quality continuum which is shown on the final page of this report. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the quality of the school's provision in each area.

The board of management was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix of this report.

Whole-School Evaluation

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

Date of inspection	10-11-2016
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meeting with principal and deputy principal• Meeting with the board of management• Meeting with parent representatives• Review of relevant documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Analysis of parent, pupil and teacher questionnaires• Observation of teaching and learning• Examination of pupils' work• Interaction with pupils• Feedback to senior management team and teachers• Feedback to parent representatives• Feedback to board of management

SCHOOL CONTEXT

This school operates under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Meath. Enrolment figures have grown steadily in recent years; current enrolment stands at 427 pupils. Overall, pupil attendance is good. The board of management is aware that the attendance of a small number of pupils needs improvement and has developed strategies that are impacting positively on attendance. Provision for four subjects—English, Irish, Mathematics and Music—was evaluated during this inspection.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- School leadership and management are good; the work of the board of management is very competent, the principal promotes well-being and positive relationships within the school community very effectively and is ably assisted by the in-school management team.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning is good; good-quality teaching skills were observed in all settings and teachers are to be highly commended for their creation of a stimulating learning environment.
- The quality of support for pupils' well-being is highly commendable.
- While teachers make effective use of concrete materials during Mathematics' lessons and concepts are well taught, more able pupils are not being sufficiently challenged in their learning.
- There is a lack of clarity in relation to aspects of continuity and progression in Music and Irish.
- While the school has assembled a considerable amount of assessment data, this data is not yet being used to optimal effect.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Greater use should be made of the analysis of assessment data to inform lesson objectives and learning activities that are appropriately differentiated for the wide range of learning abilities.
- In the planning and delivery of Mathematics' lessons, teachers should provide more challenging learning activities for the more able pupils.
- In order to ensure appropriate continuity and progression in Music, a more structured and systematic approach to curriculum implementation is needed.
- Tá gá le cur chuige córasach, céimniúil a chur i bhfeidhim do mhúineadh na Gaeilge ionas go mbeidh leanúnachas agus forbairt i bhfoghlaím na ndaltaí. *There is a need to implement a*

structured, systematic approach to the teaching of Irish to ensure continuity and development in the pupils' learning.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. QUALITY OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

- The overall quality of school leadership and management is good. The work of the board of management is very competent. Board members engage in policy formulation, attend to the development of the school building and are very supportive of teachers' professional development. The board is well informed regarding curriculum and pastoral matters.
- The principal promotes well-being and positive relationships within the school community very effectively and mediates change in response to the evolving needs of the school. She is ably assisted by the in-school management (ISM) team. Systematic procedures underpin the work of the principal and the ISM team; this is very good practice. Going forward, the principal and the ISM team should monitor the impact of curricular interventions with a view to informing future practice. It is highly commendable that information sessions are provided for parents with regard to aspects of curriculum provision and the promotion of pupils' social and emotional development.
- The school has an enthusiastic and supportive parents' association. In a meeting with parent representatives, it was evident that parents are very satisfied with the quality of educational provision in the school. In the Inspectorate surveys, almost all parents agreed that the school is well run and that their child is making good progress and feels safe and well looked after therein.
- The management of resources is good. School leaders and teachers have embraced many changes in recent years due to growing pupil numbers. Ancillary staff contributes very beneficially to the smooth running of the school.
- Confirmation was provided that the board of management has formally adopted the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* without modification and that the school is compliant with the requirements of the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

2. QUALITY OF SCHOOL PLANNING AND SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION

- Overall, the quality of school planning and school self-evaluation (SSE) is good. The school has engaged in a reflective and systematic manner in the SSE process and has identified specific and appropriate targets. Parents are knowledgeable and supportive of this work. As the school continues to develop its approach to SSE, it should reflect upon how best the achievement of targets can be monitored in order to generate optimal impact.
- The effectiveness of organisational policies is evident in the smooth running of the school. There is scope to improve the quality of whole-school curriculum plans; they should be further contextualised to the school and provide additional guidance to support teachers'

planning and practice. Future reviews should focus on ensuring appropriate continuity and progression in teaching and learning across the school.

- Teachers' long-term planning is delineated successfully into time-bound units. Short-term planning is satisfactory overall. Learning objectives require further clarity and need to be differentiated to meet the wide range of learning abilities of the pupils. Regular reviews of monthly progress reports should be undertaken to facilitate the monitoring of curriculum implementation and to inform continuity and progression in pupils' learning.

3. QUALITY OF TEACHING, LEARNING AND PUPIL ACHIEVEMENT

- The overall quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is good; good-quality teaching skills were observed in all settings during the evaluation. Lessons were generally suitably structured and paced and had a clear focus. Teachers create positive, orderly learning environments and are highly commended for displays that support teaching and learning. Pupils apply themselves well to their learning. In the Inspectorate questionnaires, almost all pupils agreed that they enjoy their lessons and learning and their teacher explains things clearly. To optimise the impact of the good teaching capacity within the school, a focus on learner outcomes that are appropriately pitched and reflective of the wide range of ability levels should be prioritised.
- Approaches to play-based learning are in the early stages of development, opportunities for language learning should be fully exploited. Deeper engagement with *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and its support material will enhance the delivery of an emergent and enquiry-based provision.
- Tá cáilíocht an teagaisc agus na foghlama sa Ghaeilge sásúil. Déanann roinnt mhaith oidí iarrachtaí creidiúnacha suim na ndaltaí sa Ghaeilge labhartha a mhúscailt go dearfach. Léiríonn na daltaí cumas maith i dtuiscint na Gaeilge. Cé go bhfuil siad ábalta foclóir oiriúnach a úsáid, téann sé dian ar dhaltaí sna meánranganna agus sna h-ar-dranganna struchtúr a chur ar abairtí go neamhspleách. Chun tacú le forbairt na scileanna teanga, moltar do na hoidí a bheith níos cinnte faoin teanga nua atá le múineadh agus é a mhúineadh i gcomhthéacs realaíoch na ndaltaí. Tá gá le cur chuige córasach, céimniúil a chur i bhfeidhim do mhúineadh na Gaeilge ionas go mbeidh leanúnachas agus forbairt i bhfoghlaim na ndaltaí. Ba chóir úsáid níos córasaí a bhaint as an nGaeilge neamhfhoirmiúil ar bhonn uile-scoile freisin.

The quality of teaching and learning in Irish is satisfactory. Many teachers make creditable efforts to encourage pupils' interest positively in spoken Irish. Pupils demonstrate good ability in understanding Irish. While they are able to use appropriate vocabulary, pupils in middle and senior classes have difficulty in structuring a range of sentences independently. To support the development of language skills, it is recommended that teachers are more specific about the new language to be taught and should teach it in a realistic context for pupils. There is a need to implement a structured, systematic approach to the teaching of Irish to ensure continuity and development in the pupils learning. Incidental Irish should also be used more systematically on a whole-school basis.

- The quality of teaching and learning in English is good. The majority of pupils read competently and benefit from the use of graded reading material. The newly developed library area is praiseworthy. While worthwhile whole-school approaches to the development

of comprehension skills have been implemented, there is scope to systematically extend pupils' application of these skills. The introduction of differentiated group-based approaches to the exploration of novels will be helpful in this regard. There is scope to enhance pupils' competence and confidence in oral language. Teachers should place additional emphasis on the development of language skills when planning oral language activities. Good examples of writing were observed across a range of genre, a more systematic approach to the teaching of writing genres and the development of pupils' spelling is advised.

- There is improvement needed in some areas of provision for Mathematics. Some teachers make effective use of visual resources and concrete materials. Concepts are well taught and the whole-school focus on the development of pupils' mathematical language is valuable. In a few lessons observed, the learning activities were pitched inappropriately for the pupils' cognitive ability. In other lessons, the learning activities were insufficiently differentiated for the varying range of pupils' abilities, particularly for more able pupils. It is recommended that lesson objectives and learning activities are differentiated to accommodate the full range of pupils' learning abilities. While in-class interventions are well organised and suitably structured, there is potential to use whole-school assessment data more closely to underpin and tailor interventions to the specific aspects for development in pupils' learning.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Music is satisfactory. The school choir sings tunefully and the enjoyment of music is promoted. Pupils in the middle classes play the recorder to a good standard. The school's development of pupils' skills in music literacy is fair. While a broad-based developmental curriculum is evident in infants, there is scope to ensure appropriate continuity and progression in all strands of the Music curriculum as pupils progress through the school. A more structured and systematic approach to curriculum implementation is recommended.
- While the school has assembled a considerable amount of assessment data, the analysis of this data is not being used to optimal effect. It is recommended that greater use be made of assessment data to explicitly inform differentiated learner outcomes and the development of pupils' higher-order skills. Greater monitoring of pupils' written work and the provision of formative feedback are also advised.

4. QUALITY OF SUPPORT FOR PUPILS

- The overall quality of support for pupils is good. The facilitation of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) in mainstream classes is very effective. Innovative approaches are adopted to support pupils experiencing social and emotional difficulties. During the evaluation, teachers' interactions with pupils, including pupils with autistic spectrum disorders, were affirming and very skilful. The special needs assistants support the provision for pupils' care needs and their inclusion in school life diligently.
- Further development of literacy and numeracy initiatives and of differentiated support for pupils in mainstream classes would support the school in addressing the wide range of pupils' learning needs in these areas.
- Individual education plans for pupils with SEN address the full range of pupils' learning and developmental needs successfully. In some instances, more regular monitoring of pupils' progress would support teachers in reviewing pupils' targets.
- The quality of support for pupils' well-being is very good. Teachers are committed to undertaking professional development and have implemented programmes which promote

the development of pupils' social skills and well-being. The school's range of extra-curricular activities is of a very high standard.

- Commendably, the school has a pupil council. The council actively supports pupils' involvement in the operation of the school and reports to the parents' association on its work. The promotion of pupils' well-being and the celebration of the achievements of pupils are key priorities of the council.

Appendix

School response to the report

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A: Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management welcomes the many positive findings outlined in our evaluation report. We are pleased by the broad focus of the report and its affirmation of the positive work undertaken in our school and the professionalism and commitment of our management and staff to teaching, learning and pupil achievement.

We were particularly pleased with the inspection team's observation of the very high quality of support for pupils' well-being, the work of the Student Council, the commendation of the choir, recorder playing and many extra-curricular activities that take place, all particular strengths of our school. The acknowledgement of our inclusive, child-centred and welcoming atmosphere and high level supports for Special Needs is particularly welcoming.

The parents' active engagement and support acknowledged in the report is greatly appreciated. We also appreciate the acknowledgement of the very effective operation of the Board and its tremendous work in the organisation of the school.

Part B: Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection

The Board of Management is happy to implement the recommendations made by the Inspectorate as we absolutely believe in and encourage best practice in all areas of school life in order to provide optimum learning experiences for the students of St. Joseph's N.S.

Action Plan

- Data generated from assessment practice will be used to greater effect to support pupils' learning. We plan to have more regular planning meetings each month between class teachers to facilitate this.
- Teachers will seek to ensure that lesson content is differentiated further to meet individual pupils' learning needs. We will agree on a detailed template for Cuntaisí Míósúla to facilitate this.
- Working groups to be set up for target areas:
 - Oral Language development in Gaeilge and English
 - Update core curricular content and teaching strategies at each level for more systematic implementation of the Maths, Music and Gaeilge curricula.

THE INSPECTORATE'S QUALITY CONTINUUM

Inspectors describe the quality of provision in the school using the Inspectorate's quality continuum which is shown below. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the quality the school's provision of each area.

Level	Description	Example of descriptive terms
Very Good	Very good applies where the quality of the areas evaluated is of a very high standard. The very few areas for improvement that exist do not significantly impact on the overall quality of provision. For some schools in this category the quality of what is evaluated is outstanding and provides an example for other schools of exceptionally high standards of provision.	Very good; of a very high quality; very effective practice; highly commendable; very successful; few areas for improvement; notable; of a very high standard. Excellent; outstanding; exceptionally high standard, with very significant strengths; exemplary
Good	Good applies where the strengths in the areas evaluated clearly outweigh the areas in need of improvement. The areas requiring improvement impact on the quality of pupils' learning. The school needs to build on its strengths and take action to address the areas identified as requiring improvement in order to achieve a <i>very good</i> standard.	Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement
Satisfactory	Satisfactory applies where the quality of provision is adequate. The strengths in what is being evaluated just outweigh the shortcomings. While the shortcomings do not have a significant negative impact they constrain the quality of the learning experiences and should be addressed in order to achieve a better standard.	Satisfactory; adequate; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist; acceptable level of quality; improvement needed in some areas
Fair	Fair applies where, although there are some strengths in the areas evaluated, deficiencies or shortcomings that outweigh those strengths also exist. The school will have to address certain deficiencies without delay in order to ensure that provision is satisfactory or better.	Fair; evident weaknesses that are impacting on pupils' learning; less than satisfactory; experiencing difficulty; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve
Weak	Weak applies where there are serious deficiencies in the areas evaluated. Immediate and coordinated whole-school action is required to address the areas of concern. In some cases, the intervention of other agencies may be required to support improvements.	Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties;